DASH EATING PLAN

Healthy Eating, Proven Results

The DASH eating plan is flexible and easy to follow with many resources to help you create healthy habits for a lifetime wherever you are on your health journey.

What you choose to eat can affect your chances of developing high blood pressure, also known as hypertension. Following the DASH—Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension—eating plan and eating less sodium have been scientifically proven to lower blood pressure and have other health benefits.

Developed through research by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), the DASH eating plan emphasizes vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fish, poultry, beans, nuts, low-fat dairy, and healthy oils. It focuses on reducing sodium and limiting foods that are high in saturated fat, including fatty meats, full-fat dairy products, and tropical oils. It also limits sweets and sugar-sweetened beverages. The eating plan is aimed, in part, at helping Americans with high blood pressure, a leading risk factor for heart disease, stroke, and other health problems.

The DASH eating plan requires no special foods and has easy recipes. It's flexible and can be adapted for your entire family to meet varied nutritional needs and food preferences.

Daily and weekly nutritional goals are a key part of the DASH eating plan and help you learn about nutrition and keep track of what you eat. Complementing the eating plan with physical activity can help you control high blood pressure and create heart healthy habits for a lifetime.

The DASH Journey

Starting a new way of eating can seem overwhelming, but it doesn't have to be. DASH provides easy-to-understand guidelines, delicious recipes, and lessons to develop the skills to prepare healthy meals at home or make smart choices when dining out. Where are you on your health journey? Consider these three profiles to help you decide which resources to check out first on your way to a heart healthy way of life. Looking for a specific DASH resource? See the complete collection of Tools for a Healthy Life organized by topic following the DASH journey levels.

LEVEL 1

New to DASH

LEARN HOW TO GET STARTED

You have just been diagnosed with high blood pressure and don't know where to begin. You are ready to make a change but it all seems so overwhelming. Everywhere you turn there are quick-fix diets and complicated, expensive eating plans with special foods and many restrictions. Perhaps you discovered DASH through a web search because you are pre-hypertensive and want to learn more about prevention, or maybe your doctor told you to learn more about DASH. Understanding what is happening in your body is the first step, with gradual and easy steps to follow.

What is High Blood Pressure?

Learn the basics about high blood pressure—what it is, who is at risk, how to understand the numbers—so that you can take steps to get it under control.

Getting Started on DASH

Learn how to take the first steps to adopt the DASH eating plan—assess where you are, discuss medication, make it part of your everyday life.

Making the Move to DASH

The DASH eating plan is explained in a single page of simple tips to make the plan work for you—gradually, healthfully, and successfully.

Tips to Reduce Salt and Sodium

Complete with tips for dining out and an easy-to-read chart about sodium content in several foods, learn how to further lower sodium and gain even bigger heart healthy benefits.

Tips to Keep on Track

Follow these steps to help you get back on track even if you slip from the DASH eating plan for a few days.

Nutrition Facts Label Guide

Use this graphical insert to learn about the parts of the Nutrition Facts label and other packaging labels so you can make informed choices based on what's in the food you're buying.

LEVEL 2

Next Level DASH

KEEP IMPROVING ON YOUR HEALTH JOURNEY

You are familiar with the basics of DASH, and you're ready to learn more about how to take it to the next level. You want to exercise more, and are eager to manage your high blood pressure. You have seen benefits from a gradual approach to changing your eating habits and want to learn more about meal planning and adding new foods to your diet. You have started by gradually eating more fruits and vegetables and are seeking information about easy recipes to add variety and keep you motivated.

A Week With the DASH Eating Plan

This comprehensive guide provides a complete set of menus to help you plan healthy, delicious meals for a week.

What's on Your Plate?

These worksheets help you track what you eat and drink and describe serving sizes in each of the major food groups. They can help you can assess your current eating habits or monitor your efforts with DASH based on your caloric needs ranging from 1,200 to 2,600 calories per day.

Tips to Lowering Calories on DASH

Read about easy food substitutions to help you lose weight and maintain it once you do.

Getting More Potassium

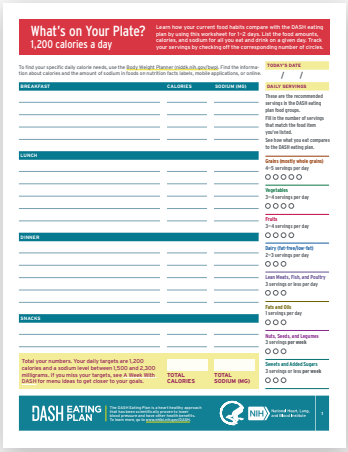
Learn about this heart healthy mineral's benefits and find a list of potassium-rich foods to help lower high blood pressure.

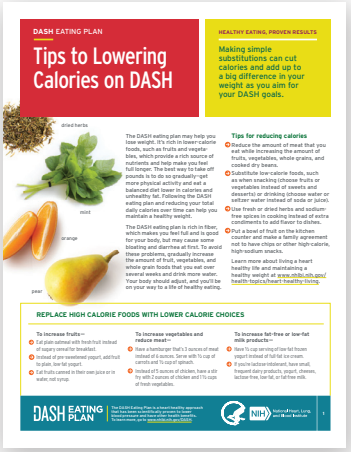
Get Active With DASH

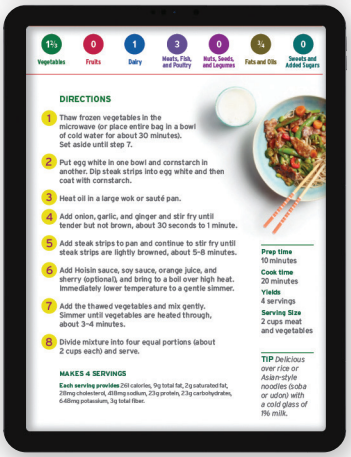
Being more active bolsters the benefits of the DASH eating plan. Learn how to gradually move more to make physical activity part of your daily routine and your heart healthy life.

Delicious Heart Healthy Eating Website

In this vast online collection of DASH-friendly recipes, you'll find a variety of cuisines and resources for families, educational videos, and meal planning and cooking tips.







LEVEL 3

DASH Expert

EXPLORE THE SCIENCE BEHIND DASH

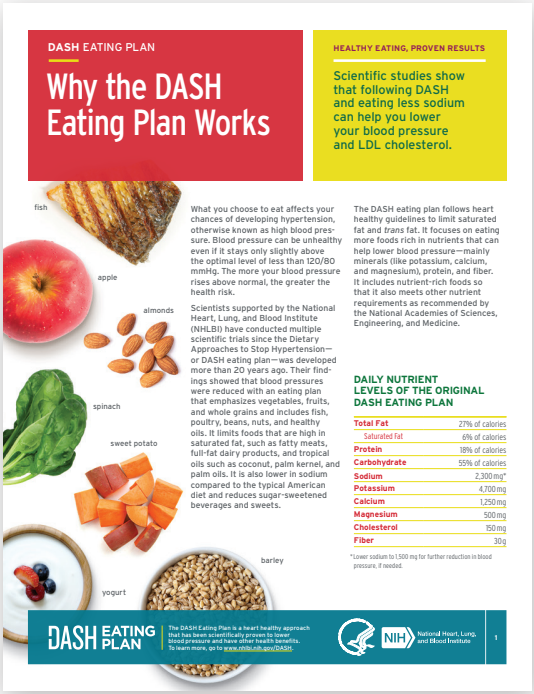
You are an expert about DASH from either adopting it in your own life or as a health professional. Perhaps you're a physician, community health advocate, dietitian, or nutrition coach who discusses DASH with clients. Perhaps you simply want to know all of the details about DASH and why it's a proven plan. Health professionals are encouraged to use the entire collection of DASH materials based on client needs. "Why the DASH Eating Plan Works" resource provides a summary of the decades of science behind DASH, while the website delves into multiple studies and links to other medical, scientific, and governmental resources.

Why the DASH Eating Plan Works

The DASH eating plan is based on decades of scientific research and data from multiple studies. Learn about the science behind DASH and why it's so effective.

DASH Website

NHLBI has information about the DASH eating plan, clinical trials, related health topics, and downloads for all of the DASH materials.



DASH EATING PLAN

Why the DASH Eating Plan Works

HEALTHY EATING, PROVEN RESULTS

Scientific studies show that following DASH and eating less sodium can help you lower your blood pressure and LDL cholesterol.

fish

apple

almonds

spinach

sweet potato

barley

yogurt

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Scientists supported by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) have conducted multiple scientific trials since the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension—or DASH eating plan—was developed more than 20 years ago. Their findings showed that blood pressures were reduced with an eating plan that emphasizes vegetables, fruits, and whole grains and includes fish, poultry, beans, nuts, and healthy oils. It limits foods that are high in saturated fat, such as fatty meats, full-fat dairy products, and tropical oils such as coconut, palm kernel, and palm oils. It is also lower in sodium compared to the typical American diet and reduces sugar-sweetened beverages and sweets.

The DASH eating plan follows heart healthy guidelines to limit saturated fat and trans fat. It focuses on eating more foods rich in nutrients that can help lower blood pressure—mainly minerals (like potassium, calcium, and magnesium), protein, and fiber. It includes nutrient-rich foods so that it also meets other nutrient requirements as recommended by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.

DAILY NUTRIENT LEVELS OF THE ORIGINAL DASH EATING PLAN

Total Fat	27% of calories
Saturated Fat	6% of calories
Protein	18% of calories
Carbohydrate	55% of calories
Sodium	2,300 mg*
Potassium	4,700 mg
Calcium	1,250 mg
Magnesium	500 mg
Cholesterol	150 mg
Fiber	30 g

*Lower sodium to 1,500 mg for further reduction in blood pressure, if needed.

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NIH National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

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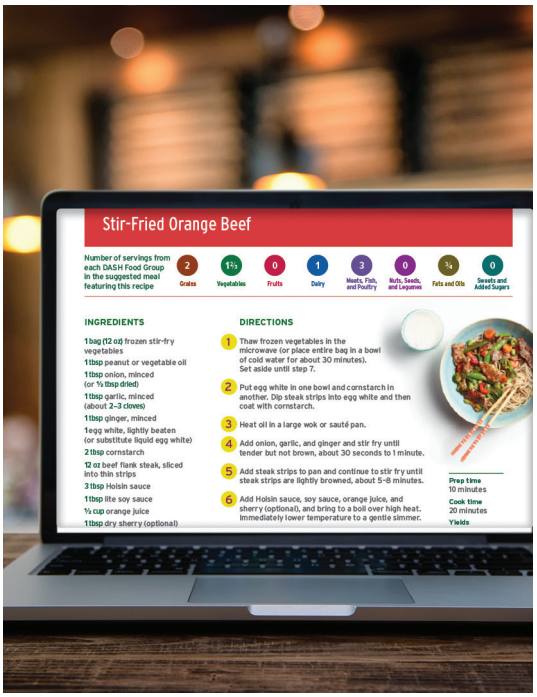

DASH EATING PLAN

Tools for a Healthy Life

HEALTHY EATING, PROVEN RESULTS

The NHLBI has developed many user-friendly materials to help you follow the DASH eating plan, understand how it works, try new foods, and make smart choices on your journey to a healthy lifestyle.

THE SCIENCE BEHIND DASH

Get information about high blood pressure along with scientific research on how DASH works.

What is High Blood Pressure?

Learn the basics about high blood pressure—what it is, who is at risk, how to understand the numbers—so that you can take steps to get it under control.

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DASH EATING PLAN

What is High Blood Pressure?

HEALTHY EATING, PROVEN RESULTS

The DASH eating plan can help you control high blood pressure and achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

Every time your heart beats, it pumps blood through vessels, called arteries, to the rest of your body. Your blood pressure is how hard your blood pushes against the walls of the arteries. If your blood flows at higher than normal pressure, you may have high blood pressure, also known as hypertension.

If you have high blood pressure, you aren't alone. High blood pressure affects nearly half of U.S. adults. Many people don't even know they have it, which is why it's so important to have your blood pressure checked at least once a year.

Understanding high blood pressure

Blood pressure rises and falls during the day. But when it stays elevated over time, it's called high blood pressure. It's dangerous because the heart is working too hard, and the force of the blood flow can harm arteries and organs. High blood pressure is a major risk factor for heart disease, which is the leading cause of death in the United States.

High blood pressure often has no warning signs or symptoms. That's why it's called a "silent killer." If uncontrolled, it harms your heart and contributes to kidney disease, stroke, blindness, and dementia.

Managing high blood pressure

Sometimes health care providers prescribe medication to manage high blood pressure, which should be taken as directed. If your blood pressure isn't too high, you may be able to control it entirely by following the DASH eating plan, losing even just a little weight, getting regular physical activity, mindfully managing stress, cutting down on alcohol, and not smoking.

Learn more about high blood pressure at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hypertension.

RISK FACTORS FOR HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

Age: Blood pressure tends to get higher as we get older. Our blood vessels naturally thicken and stiffen over time. But many younger people, including children and teens, develop high blood pressure, too.

Sex: Before age 60, more men than women have high blood pressure. After age 60, more women than men have it.

Genes: High blood pressure often runs in families.

Race or ethnicity: While anyone can have high blood pressure, African Americans tend to get it at a younger age. Among Hispanic adults, people of Cuban, Puerto Rican, and Dominican backgrounds are at higher risk.

Lifestyle habits: Eating unhealthy foods, especially those with too much salt, drinking too much alcohol or caffeine, being obese, smoking, and not getting enough exercise can raise blood pressure.

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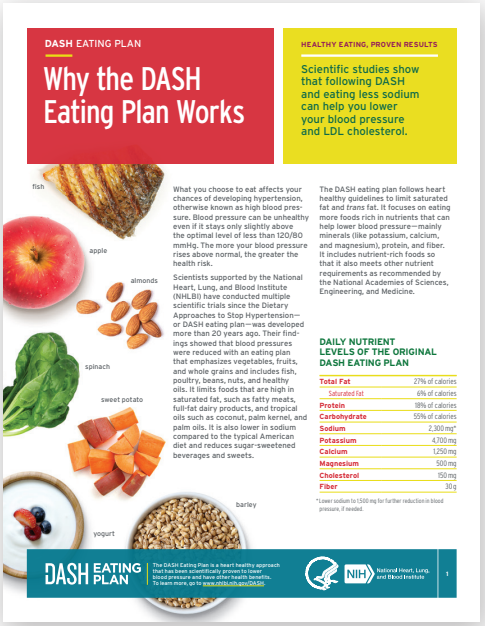
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DASH WEB RESOURCES

Comprehensive websites keep you current about how to live a healthy life with DASH.

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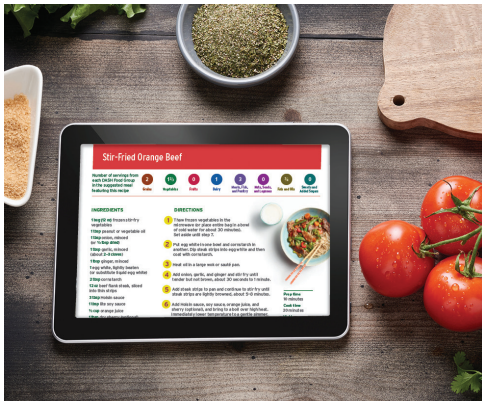

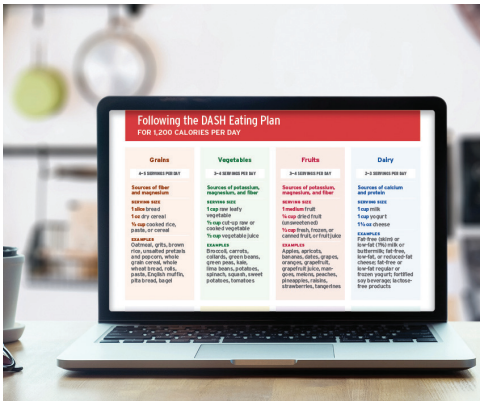

Tools for a Healthy Life

THE HEALTHY BASICS OF DASH

Start your journey to healthy living on DASH with these tools to inform, inspire and motivate.

Getting Started on DASH

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Being more active bolsters the benefits of the DASH eating plan. Learn how to gradually move more to make physical activity part of your daily routine and your heart healthy life.

DASH EATING PLAN

Getting Started on DASH

HEALTHY EATING, PROVEN RESULTS

It's easy to adopt the DASH eating plan. Even small changes made gradually lead to significant benefits. Follow these steps to begin a healthy lifestyle for a lifetime.

kale

kidney beans

blackberries

potato

salmon

1 **Assess where you are now.**
The DASH eating plan requires no special foods and has no hard-to-follow recipes. One way to begin is by using the free, interactive, online Body Weight Planner (niddk.nih.gov/bwp) to find out how many calories you need per day to maintain or reach your goal weight. Then fill in the What's on Your Plate? worksheet for a few days and see how your current food habits compare with the DASH plan. This will help you see what changes you need to make.

2 **Discuss medication with your doctor.**
If you take medication to control high blood pressure or cholesterol, you should not stop using it. Follow the DASH eating plan and talk with your doctor about your medication treatment as part of an overall plan for wellness.

3 **Make DASH a part of your healthy life.**
The DASH eating plan along with other lifestyle changes can help you control your blood pressure and lower blood cholesterol. Important lifestyle recommendations include: achieve and maintain a healthy weight, get regular physical activity, and, if you drink alcohol, do so in moderation (up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men).

4 **DASH is for everyone in the family.**
Start with the meal plans in A Week With the DASH Eating Plan if you want to follow the menus similar to those used in the DASH trial—then make up your own using your favorite foods. In fact, your entire family can eat meals using the DASH eating plan because it can be adapted to meet varied nutritional needs, food preferences, and dietary requirements.

5 **Don't worry.**
Remember that on some days the foods you eat may add up to more than the recommended servings from one food group and less from another. Or, you may have too much sodium on a particular day. Just try your best to keep the average of several days close to the DASH eating plan and the sodium level recommended for you.

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DASH EATING PLAN

Making the Move to DASH

HEALTHY EATING, PROVEN RESULTS

Moving to heart healthy eating may seem difficult, but it doesn't have to be. Here are some tips to make DASH work for you.

peas

bell pepper

squash

shrimp

chickpeas

Change gradually.
- If you now eat one or two servings of vegetables a day, add a serving at lunch and another at dinner.
- If you don't eat fruit now or have juice only at breakfast, add a serving of fruit to your meals or have it as a snack.
- Gradually increase your use of milk, yogurt, and cheese to three servings a day. For example, drink milk with lunch or dinner, instead of soda, sugar-sweetened tea, or alcohol.
- Choose fat-free or low-fat (1 percent) milk, yogurt, and reduced-fat cheese to reduce your intake of saturated fat, cholesterol, and calories and to increase your calcium.
- Read the Nutrition Facts label on frozen and prepared meals, pizza, and desserts to choose those lowest in saturated fat and *trans* fat.

Vary your proteins.
- Choose lean cuts of meat and remove skin from poultry.
- Check the labels on ground meats and poultry and select those with lower saturated fat.
- Serve fish instead of meat or poultry once or twice each week.
- Include two or more vegetarian (meatless) meals each week.
- Aim to fill ½ your plate with vegetables and fruits, ¼ with whole grains, and ¼ with fish, lean meat, poultry, or beans.
- Add extra vegetables to casseroles, pasta, and stir-fry dishes.

Select nutritious, tasty snacks.
- Fruits offer great taste and variety. Use fruits canned in their own juice or packed in water. Fresh fruits are fast and easy and dried fruits are a good choice to carry with you or to have in the car.
- Try these snack ideas: unsalted rice cakes; nuts mixed with raisins; graham crackers; fat-free and low-fat yogurt; popcorn with no salt or butter added; raw vegetables.

Make healthy substitutions.
- Choose whole grain foods for most grain servings to get more nutrients, such as minerals and fiber. For example, choose whole wheat bread or whole grain cereals.
- If you have trouble digesting milk and milk products, try taking lactase enzyme pills with the milk products. Or, buy lactose-free milk.
- If you are allergic to nuts, use beans or seeds (such as sunflower, flax, or sesame seeds).

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DASH EATING PLAN

Tips to Keep on Track

HEALTHY EATING, PROVEN RESULTS

The DASH eating plan is a new way of eating—for a lifetime. If you slip from the eating plan for a few days, don't let it keep you from reaching your health goals. Get back on track.

broccoli

whole-grain pasta

tomatoes

thyme

peaches

1 **Ask yourself why you got off track.**
Was it at a party? Were you feeling stress at home or work? Find out what triggered your sidetrack and start again with the DASH plan.

2 **Don't worry about a slip.**
Everyone slips—especially when learning something new. Remember that changing your lifestyle is a long-term process.

3 **See if you tried to do too much at once.**
Often, those starting a new lifestyle try to change too much at once. Instead, change one or two things at a time. Slowly but surely is the best way to succeed.

4 **Break the process down into small steps.**
This not only keeps you from trying to do too much at once, but also keeps the changes easier. Break complex goals into simpler, attainable steps.

5 **Write it down.**
Learn what your daily calorie level should be to maintain or reach your goal weight by using the free, interactive, online Body Weight Planner (niddk.nih.gov/bwp). Then use the What's on Your Plate? worksheet to keep track of what you eat and drink. Knowing what your goal is and then keeping track for several days can help you succeed. You may find, for instance, that you eat sugary or salty snacks while watching television. If so, try keeping healthier snacks on hand. This record also helps you be sure you're getting enough of each food group each day.

6 **Celebrate success.**
Treat yourself to a nonfood reward for your accomplishments. You could see a new movie, get a massage, or buy yourself flowers or a fun gift.

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DASH EATING PLAN

Get Active With DASH

HEALTHY EATING, PROVEN RESULTS

Combining the DASH eating plan and physical activity can lower high blood pressure and make your heart healthier.

Making physical activity part of your daily life while following the DASH eating plan multiplies the health benefits. Being active can lower high blood pressure, improve cholesterol and blood glucose levels, protect your heart, improve blood flow, and help you manage stress. The good news is there are many ways to make moving more part of your life gradually.

Types of physical activity
The four main types of physical activity are aerobic, muscle-strengthening, bone-strengthening, and stretching.
- **Aerobic.** Also called endurance activity, aerobic activity benefits your heart and lungs the most. Brisk walking, running, bicycling, jumping rope, and swimming are all examples.
- **Muscle-strengthening.** Resistance training and weight lifting improve your power and endurance. You can also use elastic bands or body weight for resistance, like doing push-ups.
- **Bone-strengthening.** Weight-bearing activities such as running, walking, jumping rope, and lifting weights, make your bones strong.
- **Stretching.** Stretching improves your flexibility and your ability to fully move your joints making all other activity possible. Touching your toes, side stretches, and yoga are some examples.

How much activity is needed?
Adults should get at least 2½ hours of physical activity a week to help lower and control blood pressure. That's just 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week. If you don't have high blood pressure, being physically active can help keep it that way.

Increase activity to multiply the benefits
If you have high blood pressure, the benefits of physical activity are actually greater than in those with normal blood pressure. Both aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities are beneficial. Moderate-intensity activity for about 90 minutes a week or 45 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity helps to substantially lower your risk of heart disease. If you have high blood pressure, work with your doctor as you increase your physical activity, as adjustments to medication may be needed.

Everyone can benefit by being active
If you don't have high blood pressure but still aren't active, you can benefit from increasing your physical activity to recommended levels. Physical activity can help lower blood pressure and reduce your risk of becoming overweight or obese or developing diabetes.

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Tools for a Healthy Life

DASH NUTRITION PLANNING

Learn how to shop for healthy foods and easy tips for dining out and everyday choices on DASH.

Nutrition Facts Label Guide

Use this graphical insert to learn about the parts of the Nutrition Facts label and other packaging labels so you can make informed choices based on what's in the food you're buying.

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Learn about this heart healthy mineral's benefits and find a list of potassium-rich foods to help lower high blood pressure.

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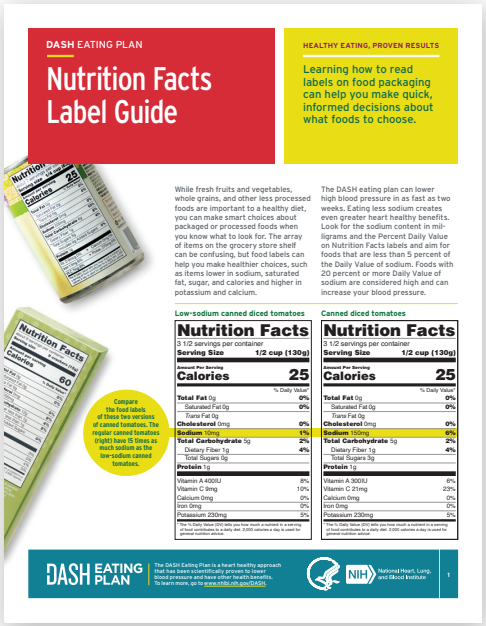

DASH EATING PLAN

Nutrition Facts Label Guide

HEALTHY EATING, PROVEN RESULTS

Learning how to read labels on food packaging can help you make quick, informed decisions about what foods to choose.

While fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and other less processed foods are important to a healthy diet, you can make smart choices about packaged or processed foods when you know what to look for. The array of items on the grocery store shelf can be confusing, but food labels can help you make healthier choices, such as items lower in sodium, saturated fat, sugar, and calories and higher in potassium and calcium.

The DASH eating plan can lower high blood pressure in as fast as two weeks. Eating less sodium creates even greater heart healthy benefits. Look for the sodium content in milligrams and the Percent Daily Value on Nutrition Facts labels and aim for foods that are less than 5 percent of the Daily Value of sodium. Foods with 20 percent or more Daily Value of sodium are considered high and can increase your blood pressure.

Low-sodium canned diced tomatoes

Nutrition Facts
3 1/2 servings per container
Serving Size 1/2 cup (130g)
Amount Per Serving
Calories 25
% Daily Value*
Total Fat 0g 0%
Saturated Fat 0g 0%
Trans Fat 0g
Cholesterol 0mg 0%
Sodium 10mg 1%
Total Carbohydrate 5g 2%
Dietary Fiber 1g 4%
Total Sugars 0g
Protein 1g
Vitamin A 400IU 8%
Vitamin C 9mg 10%
Calcium 0mg 0%
Iron 0mg 0%
Potassium 230mg 5%
*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Compare the food labels of these two versions of canned tomatoes. The regular canned tomatoes (right) have 15 times as much sodium as the low-sodium canned tomatoes.

Canned diced tomatoes

Nutrition Facts
3 1/2 servings per container
Serving Size 1/2 cup (130g)
Amount Per Serving
Calories 25
% Daily Value*
Total Fat 0g 0%
Saturated Fat 0g 0%
Trans Fat 0g
Cholesterol 0mg 0%
Sodium 150mg 6%
Total Carbohydrate 5g 2%
Dietary Fiber 1g 4%
Total Sugars 3g
Protein 1g
Vitamin A 300IU 6%
Vitamin C 21mg 23%
Calcium 0mg 0%
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Getting More Potassium

HEALTHY EATING, PROVEN RESULTS

Potassium is a heart healthy mineral that helps your body function properly and keeps blood pressure levels healthy.

salmon
dried apricots
baked potato
avocado

Increasing potassium by eating potassium-rich food is recommended for adults with high blood pressure who are otherwise healthy. While salt substitutes containing potassium are sometimes needed if you are on medication for high blood pressure, these supplements can be harmful to people with certain medical conditions. Ask your doctor before trying salt substitutes or supplements.

Fortunately, many healthy foods in the DASH eating plan are naturally rich in potassium, with vegetables and fruits being especially good sources.

Vegetables
Baked potatoes are easy to prepare and one of the best sources of potassium. One medium baked potato with the skin on has 941 mg of potassium. Top with herbs or salt-free seasoning so you can avoid any extra sodium.

Fruits
Many people know that bananas are a good source of potassium with 422 mg in a medium one, but dried fruits like peaches and apricots are also loaded with potassium and easy to have on hand for healthy snacks.

Dairy
One cup of plain, non-fat yogurt has 579 mg of potassium. Combine with fresh fruit like chopped bananas to add flavor and even more potassium. It can also be used as a dip, condiment, or substitution for high-fat dairy.

Fish
Eating fish high in omega-3 fatty acids about twice a week is recommended for heart health. Some fish are also good sources of potassium, wild Atlantic salmon being one of the best at 534 mg per 3-ounce serving.

EASY DASH RECIPES PACKED WITH POTASSIUM

Summer Breeze Smoothie
Non-fat plain yogurt, banana, strawberries, canned pineapple and a touch of vanilla make a refreshing treat.

Spicy Baked Fish
A salmon fillet, olive oil, and salt-free spicy seasoning baked for 15 minutes is quick, easy, and delicious.

Garlic Mashed Potatoes
No added salt or fat is used in this easy-to-prepare, tasty potato dish that can even be made in the microwave.

Limas and Spinach
This delicious dish delivers 452 mg of potassium per serving by combining two potassium powerhouses.

To find these and other potassium-rich recipes, visit healthyeating.nhlbi.nih.gov.

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DASH EATING PLAN

Tips to Reduce Salt and Sodium

HEALTHY EATING, PROVEN RESULTS

Studies have found that the DASH eating plan can lower blood pressure in as fast as 2 weeks. Eating less sodium creates even bigger heart healthy benefits.

zucchini
Swiss cheese
bread

Eat your veggies.
Choose plain fresh, frozen, or canned (low-sodium or no-salt-added) vegetables and season them yourself.

Fresh is best.
Choose fresh or frozen skinless poultry, fish, and lean cuts of meat rather than those that are marinated, canned, smoked, brined, or cured.

Go "low or no."
Check the Nutrition Facts labels to compare sodium levels in foods. Choose low- or reduced-sodium, or no-salt-added versions of foods.

Pay attention to preparation.
Limit cured foods (such as bacon and ham); foods packed in brine (such as pickles, pickled vegetables, olives, and sauerkraut); and condiments (such as mustard, horseradish, ketchup, and barbecue sauce). Limit even lower sodium versions of soy sauce and teriyaki sauce, which should be used as sparingly as table salt.

Subtract, don't add.
Canned foods such as tuna and beans can be rinsed to remove some of the sodium. Cook rice, pasta, and hot cereals without salt. Cut back on instant or flavored rice, pasta, and cereal mixes, which usually have added salt.

Limit salty processed foods.
Skip or limit frozen dinners and mixed dishes such as pizza, packaged mixes, canned soups or broths, and salad dressings, which often have a lot of sodium. Prepare and eat more foods at home, where you can control how much sodium is added.

Spice it up.
Boost flavor with herbs, spices, lemon, lime, vinegar, or salt-free seasoning blends instead of salt or salty seasonings like soy sauce, spice blends, or soup mixes. Start by cutting salt in half and work your way toward healthy substitutes.

EASY TIPS FOR DINING OUT

Move the salt shaker away.
This simple first step could become second nature.

Research the restaurant's menu before going out.
Check online nutrition information and then avoid these on the menu: pickled, cured, smoked, soy sauce.

Make special requests.
Ask that your meal be prepared without added salt, MSG, or salty ingredients such as bacon, pickles, olives, and cheese.

Easy does it on the condiments.
A little goes a long way for mustard, ketchup, horseradish, pickles, and sauces with salt-containing ingredients.

Go for healthy appetizers and side dishes.
Choose fruit or vegetables instead of salty snacks, chips, or fries.

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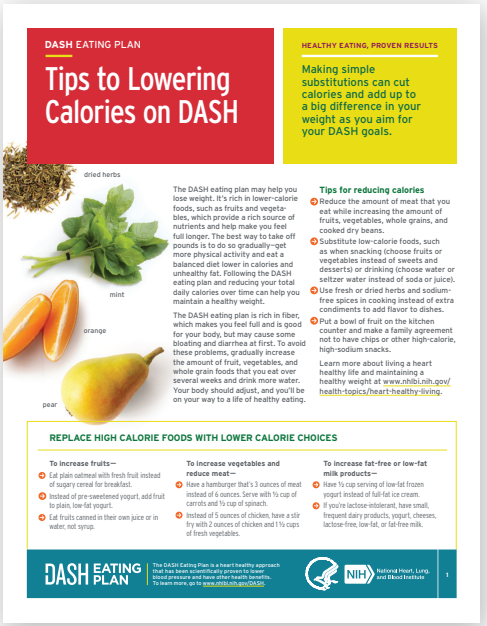

DASH EATING PLAN

Tips to Lowering Calories on DASH

HEALTHY EATING, PROVEN RESULTS

Making simple substitutions can cut calories and add up to a big difference in your weight as you aim for your DASH goals.

dried herbs
mint
orange
pear

The DASH eating plan may help you lose weight. It's rich in lower-calorie foods, such as fruits and vegetables, which provide a rich source of nutrients and help make you feel full longer. The best way to take off pounds is to do so gradually—get more physical activity and eat a balanced diet lower in calories and unhealthy fat. Following the DASH eating plan and reducing your total daily calories over time can help you maintain a healthy weight.

The DASH eating plan is rich in fiber, which makes you feel full and is good for your body, but may cause some bloating and diarrhea at first. To avoid these problems, gradually increase the amount of fruit, vegetables, and whole grain foods that you eat over several weeks and drink more water. Your body should adjust, and you'll be on your way to a life of healthy eating.

Tips for reducing calories
- Reduce the amount of meat that you eat while increasing the amount of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and cooked dry beans.
- Substitute low-calorie foods, such as when snacking (choose fruits or vegetables instead of sweets and desserts) or drinking (choose water or seltzer water instead of soda or juice).
- Use fresh or dried herbs and sodium-free spices in cooking instead of extra condiments to add flavor to dishes.
- Put a bowl of fruit on the kitchen counter and make a family agreement not to have chips or other high-calorie, high-sodium snacks.

Learn more about living a heart healthy life and maintaining a healthy weight at www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/heart-healthy-living.

REPLACE HIGH CALORIE FOODS WITH LOWER CALORIE CHOICES

To increase fruits—
- Eat plain oatmeal with fresh fruit instead of sugary cereal for breakfast.
- Instead of pre-sweetened yogurt, add fruit to plain, low-fat yogurt.
- Eat fruits canned in their own juice or in water, not syrup.

To increase vegetables and reduce meat—
- Have a hamburger that's 3 ounces of meat instead of 6 ounces. Serve with ½ cup of carrots and ½ cup of spinach.
- Instead of 5 ounces of chicken, have a stir fry with 2 ounces of chicken and 1½ cups of fresh vegetables.

To increase fat-free or low-fat milk products—
- Have ½ cup serving of low-fat frozen yogurt instead of full-fat ice cream.
- If you're lactose-intolerant, have small, frequent dairy products, yogurt, cheeses, lactose-free, low-fat, or fat-free milk.

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Tools for a Healthy Life

DASH MENUS AND WORKSHEETS

Take the mystery out of weekly meal planning and monitor your individual progress on DASH.

A Week With the DASH Eating Plan

This comprehensive guide provides a complete set of menus to help you plan healthy, delicious meals for a week.

DASH EATING PLAN

A Week With the DASH Eating Plan

HEALTHY EATING, PROVEN RESULTS

Eating a variety of delicious foods and cutting back on salt can help lower your blood pressure. What are you waiting for? Take control of your heart health with the DASH eating plan.

whole grain roll
kidney beans
walnuts
bell pepper
chicken
rosemary
yogurt
blueberries

The DASH eating plan requires no special foods and has no hard-to-follow recipes. The following DASH menus allow you to plan healthy, nutritious meals for a week. There are a variety of delicious whole foods that fill you up while fueling your body and lowering your blood pressure and cholesterol levels. You'll find plenty of fruits and vegetables, fish, poultry, lean meats, beans, nuts, whole grains and low-fat dairy.

Built around the recommended number of servings in each of the DASH food groups, these menus sometimes call for you to use lower sodium, low-fat, fat-free, or reduced-fat versions of products. **These menus are based on 2,000 calories a day.** Serving sizes should be increased or decreased for other calorie levels. Daily sodium levels are either 2,300 milligrams or, by making the suggested changes, 1,500 milligrams.

The total daily servings by DASH food group are listed at the top. Next to each food item on the daily menu, you can check the exact serving amount for that item.

These menus give examples of heart healthy meals. How can you create your own and make the DASH eating plan part of your daily life?

- Start by learning how your current food habits compare with the DASH eating plan by using the What's on Your Plate? worksheet for a few days.
- Explore the Heart Healthy Eating webpage (healthyeating.nhlbi.nih.gov) to try new foods or learn how to make old favorites heart healthy.
- Choose your favorite foods from each of the DASH food groups based on your daily calorie needs to make your own healthy menus.
- Don't worry if some days are off target for your daily totals. Just try your best to keep the average of several days close to the recommended servings and sodium levels.

Following the DASH eating plan means you'll be eating delicious food that is also good for you. It can help you control your blood pressure, manage your weight, and lower LDL (bad) cholesterol levels—keeping your heart healthy.

KEY TO FOOD GROUPS: Grains · Vegetables · Fruits · Dairy · Meats, Fish, and Poultry · Nuts, Seeds, and Legumes · Fats and Oils · Sweets and Added Sugars

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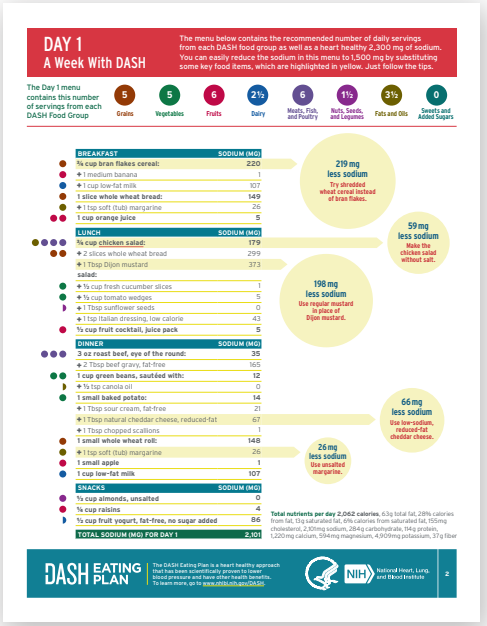

DAY 1
A Week With DASH

The menu below contains the recommended number of daily servings from each DASH food group as well as a heart healthy 2,300 mg of sodium. You can easily reduce the sodium in this menu to 1,500 mg by substituting some key food items, which are highlighted in yellow. Just follow the tips.

The Day 1 menu contains this number of servings from each DASH Food Group: 5 Grains · 5 Vegetables · 6 Fruits · 2½ Dairy · 6 Meats, Fish, and Poultry · 1½ Nuts, Seeds, and Legumes · 3½ Fats and Oils · 0 Sweets and Added Sugars

BREAKFAST	SODIUM (MG)
¾ cup bran flakes cereal:	220
+ 1 medium banana	1
+ 1 cup low-fat milk	107
1 slice whole wheat bread:	149
+ 1 tsp soft (tub) margarine	26
1 cup orange juice	5
LUNCH	**SODIUM (MG)**
¾ cup chicken salad:	179
+ 2 slices whole wheat bread	299
+ 1 Tbsp Dijon mustard	373
salad:	
+ ½ cup fresh cucumber slices	1
+ ½ cup tomato wedges	5
+ 1 Tbsp sunflower seeds	0
+ 1 tsp Italian dressing, low calorie	43
½ cup fruit cocktail, juice pack	5
DINNER	**SODIUM (MG)**
3 oz roast beef, eye of the round:	35
+ 2 Tbsp beef gravy, fat-free	165
1 cup green beans, sautéed with:	12
+ ½ tsp canola oil	0
1 small baked potato:	14
+ 1 Tbsp sour cream, fat-free	21
+ 1 Tbsp natural cheddar cheese, reduced-fat	67
+ 1 Tbsp chopped scallions	1
1 small whole wheat roll:	148
+ 1 tsp soft (tub) margarine	26
1 small apple	1
1 cup low-fat milk	107
SNACKS	**SODIUM (MG)**
½ cup almonds, unsalted	0
¼ cup raisins	4
½ cup fruit yogurt, fat-free, no sugar added	86
TOTAL SODIUM (MG) FOR DAY 1	2,101

219 mg less sodium — Try shredded wheat cereal instead of bran flakes.
59 mg less sodium — Make the chicken salad without salt.
198 mg less sodium — Use regular mustard in place of Dijon mustard.
66 mg less sodium — Use low-sodium, reduced-fat cheddar cheese.
26 mg less sodium — Use unsalted margarine.

Total nutrients per day 2,062 calories, 63g total fat, 28% calories from fat, 13g saturated fat, 6% calories from saturated fat, 105mg cholesterol, 2,101mg sodium, 284g carbohydrate, 114g protein, 1,220mg calcium, 594mg magnesium, 4,909mg potassium, 37g fiber

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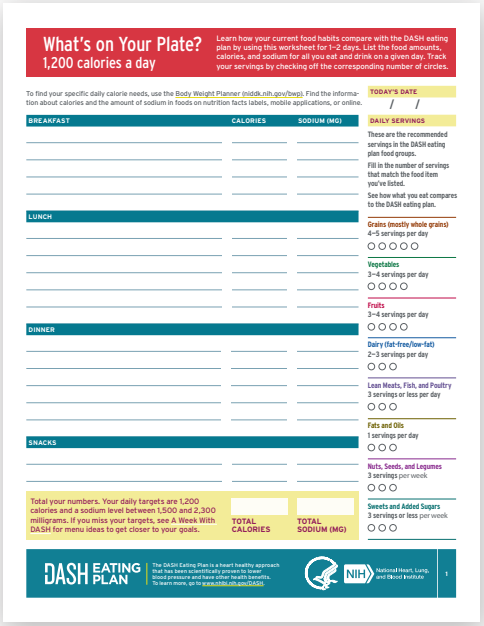
What's on Your Plate?

These worksheets help you track what you eat and drink and describe serving sizes in each of the major food groups. They can help you can assess your current eating habits or monitor your efforts with DASH based on your caloric needs ranging from 1,200 to 2,600 calories per day.



What's on Your Plate?
1,200 calories a day

Learn how your current food habits compare with the DASH eating plan by using this worksheet for 1–2 days. List the food amounts, calories, and sodium for all you eat and drink on a given day. Track your servings by checking off the corresponding number of circles.

To find your specific daily calorie needs, use the Body Weight Planner (niddk.nih.gov/bwp). Find the information about calories and the amount of sodium in foods on nutrition facts labels, mobile applications, or online.

BREAKFAST	CALORIES	SODIUM (MG)
LUNCH		
DINNER		
SNACKS		
Total your numbers. Your daily targets are 1,200 calories and a sodium level between 1,500 and 2,300 milligrams. If you miss your targets, see A Week With DASH for menu ideas to get closer to your goals.	TOTAL CALORIES	TOTAL SODIUM (MG)

TODAY'S DATE / /

DAILY SERVINGS

These are the recommended servings in the DASH eating plan food groups.

Fill in the number of servings that match the food item you've listed.

See how what you eat compares to the DASH eating plan.

- Grains (mostly whole grains) 4–5 servings per day ○○○○○
- Vegetables 3–4 servings per day ○○○○
- Fruits 3–4 servings per day ○○○○
- Dairy (fat-free/low-fat) 2–3 servings per day ○○○
- Lean Meats, Fish, and Poultry 3 servings or less per day ○○○
- Fats and Oils 1 servings per day ○○○
- Nuts, Seeds, and Legumes 3 servings per week ○○○
- Sweets and Added Sugars 3 servings or less per week ○○○

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Following the DASH Eating Plan
FOR 1,200 CALORIES PER DAY

oatmeal
whole wheat bread
brown rice
kale
green beans
vegetable juice

Grains

4–5 SERVINGS PER DAY

Sources of fiber and magnesium

SERVING SIZE
1 slice bread
1 oz dry cereal
½ cup cooked rice, pasta, or cereal

EXAMPLES
Oatmeal, grits, brown rice, unsalted pretzels and popcorn, whole grain cereal, whole wheat bread, rolls, pasta, English muffin, pita bread, bagel

Vegetables

3–4 SERVINGS PER DAY

Sources of potassium, magnesium, and fiber

SERVING SIZE
1 cup raw leafy vegetable
½ cup cut-up raw or cooked vegetable
½ cup vegetable juice

EXAMPLES
Broccoli, carrots, collards, green beans, green peas, kale, lima beans, potatoes, spinach, squash, sweet potatoes, tomatoes

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MORE INFORMATION

NHLBI Center for Health Information

P.O. Box 30105, Bethesda, MD 20824-0105
nhlbiinfo@nhlbi.nih.gov
1-877-NHLBI4U (1-877-645-2448)
For access to free Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS), dial 7-1-1 on your telephone.

To learn more about high blood pressure, the DASH eating plan, and NHLBI research in this area, visit NHLBI's high blood pressure webpage: www.nhlbi.nih.gov/hypertension.